



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

**75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901**

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94101
Reply to:
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Celeste Cantú
Executive Director
California State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Dear Ms. Cantú:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed an amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan, Central Coast Region* (Basin Plan). In today's action we approve the amendment to remove the nitrate objective for the San Lorenzo River from Chapter 3, *Water Quality Objectives*, of the Basin Plan, in association with the November 4, 2002 request for EPA approval of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nitrate in the San Lorenzo River which EPA has already approved.

This amendment was adopted by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board Resolution No. 00-001) on June 2, 2000 and approved by the State Water Resources Control Board and State Office of Administrative Law on November 15, 2001 and February 13, 2002, respectively. Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires EPA to approve or disapprove new or revised state-adopted water quality standards. EPA's action on the amendment to the Basin Plan is further detailed below.

ESA Consultation with the Services on EPA's Action

We have determined that our approval of this amendment will have no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species, and is not likely to result in the adverse modification of critical habitat.

Scope of EPA's Approval

Section 303(c) requires EPA to review and approve or disapprove new or revised water quality standards submitted by a state. For purposes of section 303(c), water quality standards generally include designated uses, water quality criteria (or "beneficial uses" and "water quality objectives," respectively under California law), an antidegradation policy, and associated implementation policies.

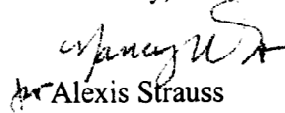
In a previous action EPA concluded that the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for San Lorenzo River, Carbonera Creek, Lompico Creek, and Shingle Mill Creek adequately addresses the pollutant of concern, and upon implementation, will result in attainment of the water quality standard for nitrate in the listed water bodies. EPA approved the TMDL pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 303(d)(2).

We have concluded that the removal of the nitrate objective for the San Lorenzo River will protect the respective beneficial uses for the River. Our conclusion is based on our review of the Complete Administrative Record for this action, the presence of general objectives in the Basin Plan (including provisions related to taste and odors, biostimulatory substances, and dissolved oxygen) and the existence of an adopted TMDL and implementation plan.

The record also indicates that the State provided adequate opportunity for public review and comment and demonstrated how public comments were considered in the final decision to remove the nitrate objective for the San Lorenzo River and replace it with a numeric target contained in the TMDL. All required elements have been adequately addressed; therefore the amendment of the Basin Plan to remove the nitrate objective for the San Lorenzo River is hereby approved.

If there are any questions regarding our action on the Basin Plan amendment, please contact Gary Sheth, of my staff, at (415) 972-3516. As always, we look forward to continued cooperation with the State in achieving our mutual environmental goals.

Sincerely,



Alexis Strauss
Director, Water Division

cc: Roger W. Briggs, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Stan Martinson, State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Quality
Catherine Kuhlman, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Loretta K. Barsamian, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
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Diane Noda, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Office
Jim Bartel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Office
James Lecky, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Region
Jennifer Wigal, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water
Claudia Fabiano, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water